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# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

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VOLUME XII  
NUMBER 7

SEPTEMBER, 1904

WHOLE  
NUMBER 117

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## THE HIGH SCHOOL OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

FROM certain approved tendencies in the high-school education of today we may, in some degree, forecast the high-school education of the future. It is plain, to begin with, that the broadening of the horizon of human knowledge will still further widen the scope of the high school. With the greater attention to the individuality of students characteristic of all educational advance, this means still greater range of elasticity in courses of study, with still further diminution of prescribed work. It will clearly appear that there is no reason why a group of young men and women of the same age should take the same studies, or that, even in secondary instruction, there is any one subject which is for all persons and at all times fundamental to mental development.

The tendencies of the day indicate a far wider extension of public education. This will involve education for the trades, for the arts, and for business. The democratic high school must provide for all of these. It is not desirable to break up the high school into special schools for various purposes. The high school should provide for all needs which it can properly meet and place them all on the same official level. The high school covers roughly four years of the time between the ages of twelve and eighteen. For the needs of students of this stage of development it should provide thoroughly, regardless of the claims of the higher public school or college which should follow after.

The high school should not be primarily a preparatory school. It should work out its own problems in its own way. It is easier

for the college to adapt itself to the high school than for the high school to fit itself to the traditions of the college. Where these traditions are founded in reason, the high school will naturally consider the matter on its merits. Where the requirements of the college are founded on tradition, the easiest way to break with tradition is to ignore it.

There is no inherent reason why the high-school period should be one of four years. The length of the period should fit the real demands. There should be no strongly marked dividing line at either end of it. At present going to college means an accession of self-dependence. With most students it means going from home for the first time. With many it means going from the instruction of women to that of men. But these conditions are not universal nor necessarily permanent.

Early in the high-school course the student should begin to differentiate his work, under the advice of the teacher, and in accordance with his ability, with the desires of his parents, and with the character of his interests. At the same time a certain number of subjects, as English and science, should be accessible to all.

With the growth of the city high school, much of the work now considered as of college grade will be attempted by it. This is well, with proper teachers, though to boys of eighteen there is a distinct educational advantage in getting away from home, especially in breaking the local ties and "putting away of childish things."

The high school of the future will be judged more and more by the results of its work. Its matter and method will be subjected to the keenest scrutiny. Its course of study at present is largely the result of accident and of tradition. Each subject contained in it must show its credentials by the results on the student. Effectiveness rather than knowledge should be the aim in education. A sound education should disclose the secret of power.

Professor David Scott Snedden, to whom the writer is indebted for various suggestions, gives this analysis of the aims of high school education:

Education should fit for individual and social usefulness. To this end the child should have opportunity and incentive for physical development, for the development of his vocational possibilities, for the development of the force and habits essential for social living, for the development of aesthetic possibilities, and

for that discipline of the mind which it is sometimes claimed is independent of these several activities.

At present it is not clear that the disciplinary studies actually give training in clear thinking, or that the æsthetic studies actually lead to the enjoyment of worthy literature or noble art. It is claimed that the social aim of secondary education is to fit for civic and community life. But if this is the case, we are not doing much that points in that direction, nor is it clear that with our "culture studies" we are actually promoting culture. What we should do I shall not pretend to say, but this is evident, that the twentieth century will be inquisitive as to these matters and will adjust them, not to accord with a theory, but to bring about results. In the same fashion, it has never been apparent that the current religious teaching was an effective instrument in social education. To the extent that it can be shown actually to develop character, religious training will have a place in the high-school curriculum; but its nature, purposes, and results will be subjected to the same keen scrutiny which will be applied to other features of high-school education. There will be no use of public funds to promote education in the interest of any religious organization or group of organizations.

As implied above, there is needed in high school and other educational practice a scientific examination of what is meant by "mental discipline." Much of our educational practice at present rests on the tacit theory that when the child is obliged to exert himself strenuously in a limited field, he thereby acquires power in all fields. For generations it has been believed that the pupil who drilled on Euclid had his "reasoning powers" so developed that they would be serviceable in any field demanding reasoning. So Latin is justified largely because it encourages linguistic and other forms of exactness. This doctrine, which underlies so much of the traditional curriculum of the high-school and early college years, has so little support from common-sense and psychology that the coming administrators of the high school will be obliged to examine it very critically.

In view of the uncertainty last mentioned, many educators are inclining to believe that the best material for the high-school curriculum is that which makes a direct appeal to the pupil as being worth while, and which is taken by the pupil because it is felt to be

worth while. In this direction lies a great advantage of science study. It is a contact with real things and may be directly related to life. In like fashion, those forms of school work which tend to bear directly on vocation—manual training, commercial work, etc.—may have a very decided educational value in the hands of teachers who know how to realize its possibilities. There seems to be no doubt that the next half-century will see a very marked development of demand for this work and appreciation of its educational value. But any such development will demand a careful study of educational aims, means, and methods.

If the development heretofore noted is to take place, it is evident that the twentieth century will demand that the teacher of the high-school pupil should be carefully prepared for his work. In the first place, he will be required to have a thorough knowledge of his subject-matter. He must know how to use that subject-matter as an educational means rather than as an end. To be able to utilize subject-matter effectively as a means of education, the future teacher must have a knowledge of children—such a knowledge as will enable him to appreciate the general processes of mental development, and to diagnose, as the physician might, individual peculiarities. Since the program will give great flexibility, and since each teacher will be largely the advisor and leader of pupils, this capacity for individual diagnosis will be in great demand. A part of this equipment, or rather the basis for it, will come from the study of psychology; but mainly it will be acquired as the physician acquires skill in diagnosis—in the clinic, in the hospital, and elsewhere, at first under competent direction. There can be no satisfactory substitute for such apprenticeship, if the teacher is not to make his first years wasteful to the pupil. Moreover, the high-school teacher must be saturated with the higher ethics of his profession. This can be acquired only by seeing his work in its larger relations. Out of all this will grow methods of teaching, the crystallized results of experience. The method does not depend primarily on the subject-matter, but on the children to be educated and the purpose of their education. Method must be learned in the laboratory, and the sole laboratory of the teacher is the schoolroom. The character, the ability, the training of the teacher is the most important factor in secondary

education, and in this regard each year of the twentieth century will show an increase of discrimination. "It matters little," so Emerson once wrote to his daughter, "it matters little what your studies are; it all lies in who your teacher is."

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